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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

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March 18, 1988

MEMORANDUM

TO : EAP - Dr. Sigur

FROM : EAP/P - Alexander Almasov

SUBJECT: Noon Press Briefing
(Spokesman: Charles Redman)

CHINA

Asked to elaborate on his quoted comments in this morning's press about PRC missile sales to Saudi Arabia, Redman said: "We believe that the acquisition of these kinds of systems is not in the interest of peace and stability in the region, and that it is another part of the disturbing regional trend in surface-to-surface missile proliferation. The sum total of that proliferation is a degradation of the security of all states in the region."

Asked why he had never voiced such concern when Israel developed the "Jericho" missile, for example, or made similar moves in this direction, Redman said: "I'm not going to make those kind of comparisons. I would just say that, in a more general sense, that we are concerned about the proliferation of surface-to-surface missiles throughout the region and we have urged restraint upon everyone."

Asked if we had asked the Chinese not to send these missiles, Redman stated that "in addition to having talked to the Saudi Arabian Government, ... we also have talked to the Government of China and they have stated categorically that they will not export nuclear weapons to any government. And we accept those assurances in both cases. In the case of the Chinese, by the way, ... that was one of the subjects raised during the (Wu) visit... The Secretary raised that with him, and ... Wu replied that China will not export nuclear weapons to any country. And we have since raised the issue with other Chinese officials and they have repeated these assurances."

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"But did you ask the Chinese not to proceed with the sale of these ones without the nuclear head?", Redman was asked. He replied: "Beyond what I have offered in terms of the assurances we have received under the current situation, I would simply leave it that we are actively engaged in an effort to see what can be done with the issue." Asked if the Saudis were "upset because you were interfering with their acquiring arms from other countries," the Spokesman replied: "That's up to the Saudi Government to speak to."

Asked if the US will request the Saudis not to take these missiles, Redman replied that "we're engaged in an effort to see what can be done... We've been in close diplomatic contact with a number of governments engaged in the issue, but I'm not going to go farther into the details." Asked if Shultz raised the issue with the Chinese in the context of nuclear capabilities or in the broader context of proliferation of that particular technology without its nuclear aspects, and had asked that they not proceed, Redman said: "I'm not going to go into requests for future actions. Our concerns are with any nuclear capability or proliferation; our concern is also with the spread of missile technology. That is an issue we have worked on consistently. We have with the Chinese, for example, raised previously to this story ... our desire to control proliferation and missile technology. And in that sense, I might just recall for the record" (here he read the attached guidance).

"So, we've been actively engaged in an effort to get other countries to join that 'regime,'" Redman continued. "All nations were invited to join. In the case of the Chinese, we have approached them specifically on several occasions about discussing this, but we really haven't had any response to that invitation." He stated that the missiles sent to the Saudis are not operational; but, when asked, he could not say when they would be or give their capabilities or number. Asked if inquiry was made about their ability to carry a chemical payload, Redman said he'd exhausted his information.

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Questioned, Redman refused to list the governments with which we've consulted on these sales to the Saudis, beyond saying the number is more than one. Asked if Iran or Iraq is making these missiles, Redman said he didn't know -- "but, obviously, this case of Iran and Iraq is perhaps the most compelling example of this disturbing trend. In this case those missiles have been used in relatively large numbers and have caused a considerable amount of damage and devastation."

Recalling that when Wu was here he had said that more Arab governments should be involved in the Middle East initiative process, a reporter asked for more information about what he was saying and about Shultz's response. Redman: "The Secretary spoke at length about our approach, about all the governments involved, about the need for Palestinians to be involved. There's a wealth of material available about our position."

Attachment: As Stated

EAP/P:WMagruder